



University of Athens

Dpt. of Communication and Media Studies

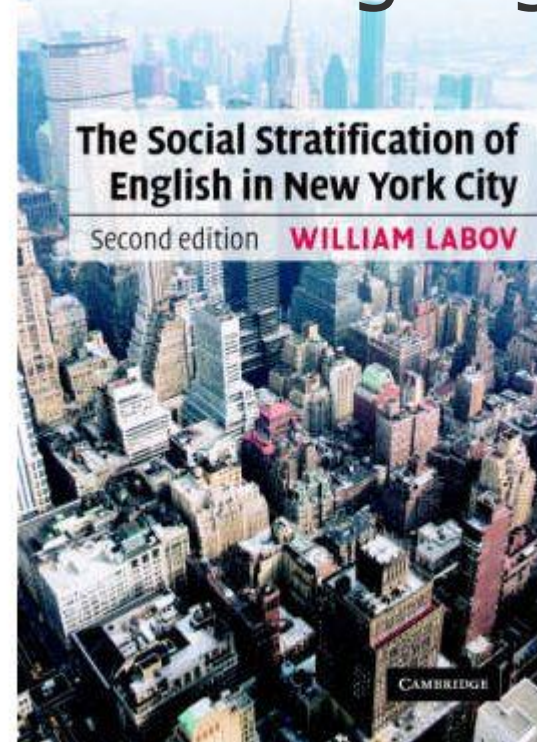
Spiros A. Moschonas

Media Sociolinguistics

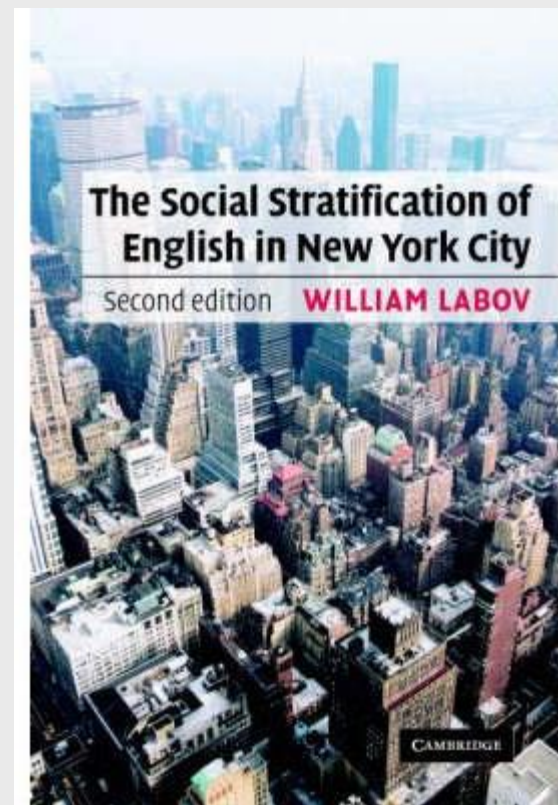
Linguistic variables

10 & 15/3/2023

1. What is a linguistic variable (γλωσσική μεταβλητή)?
2. Representative studies of language variation (γλωσσική μεταβλητότητα):
Labov, Trudgill, Cheshire
3. Media-dependent l. variables

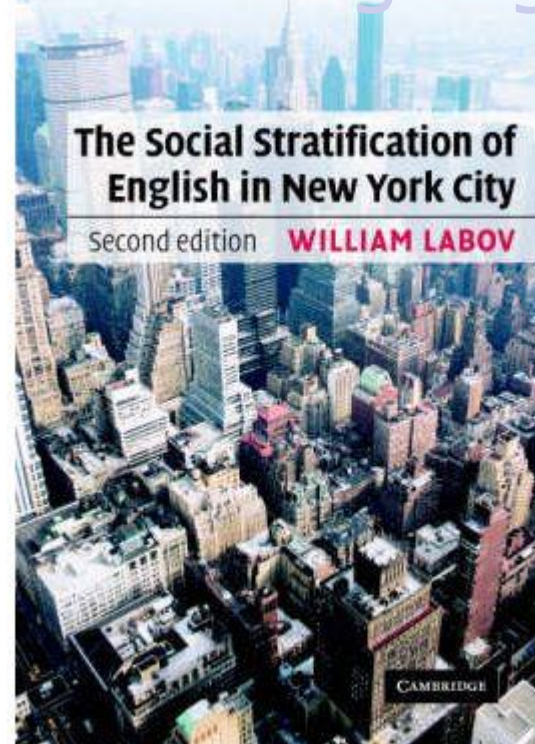


4. Writing a variationist report the easy way
5. Attitudes, ideologies. Evaluations of media-dependent variables.



1

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Linguistic variable

A *linguistic variable* (γλωσσική μεταβλητή) is a linguistic unit that can be realized in more than one way = a unit with different *variants*

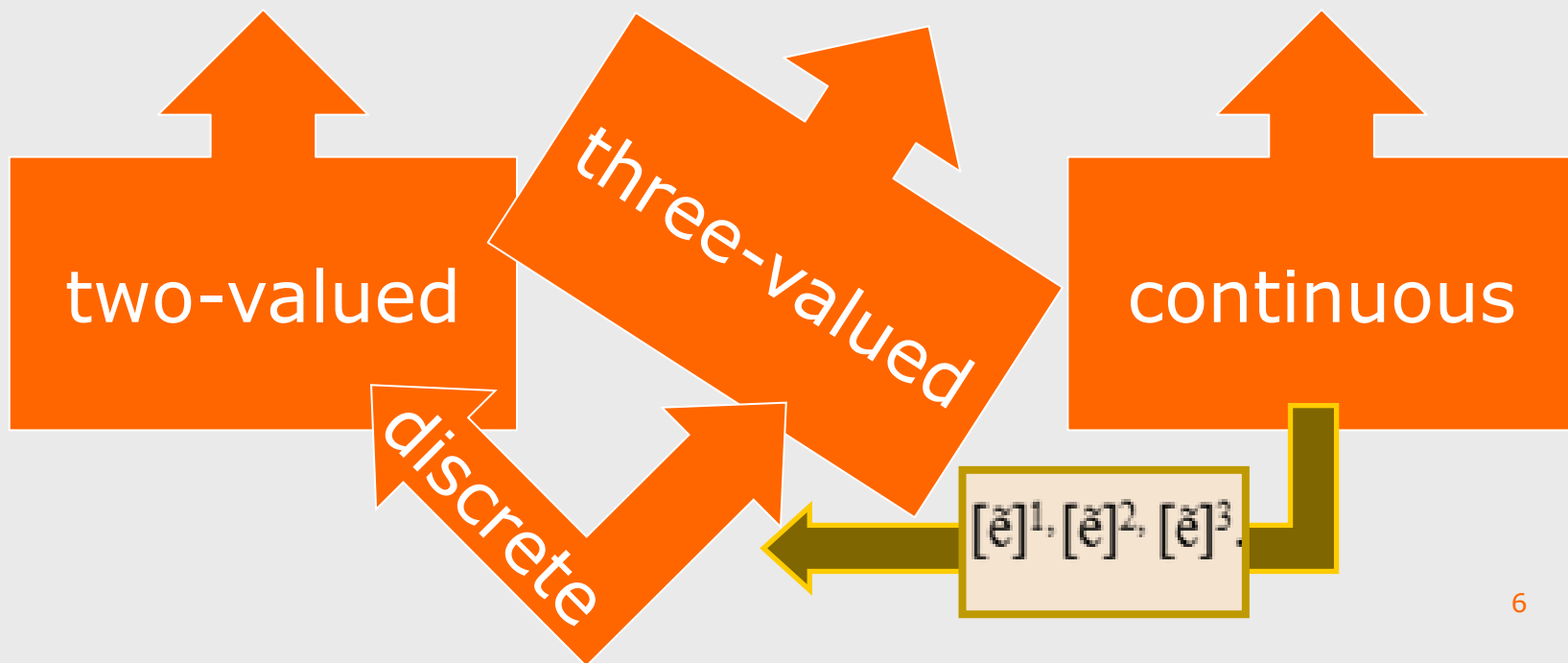
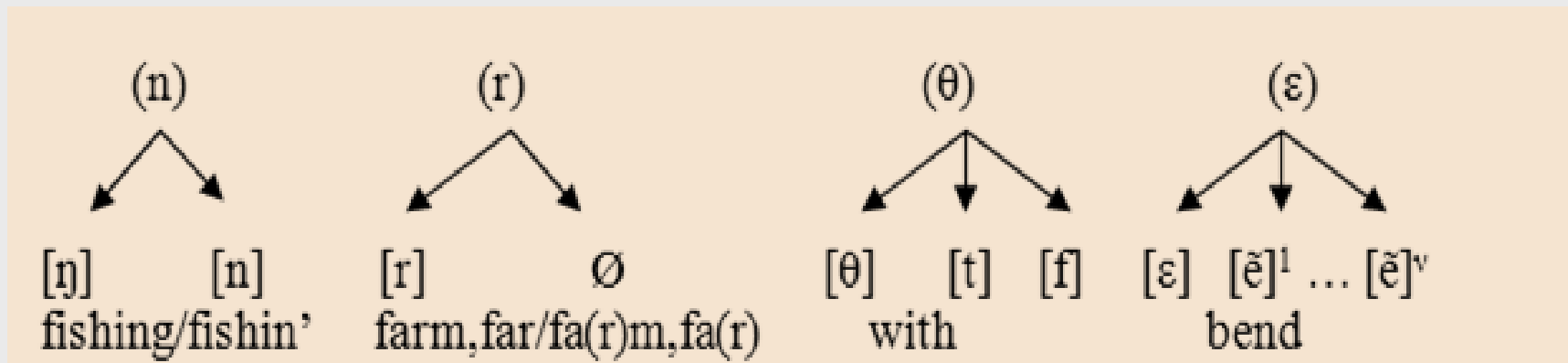
free variation («ελεύθερα εναλλασσόμενοι τύποι»)

→ conditioned variation

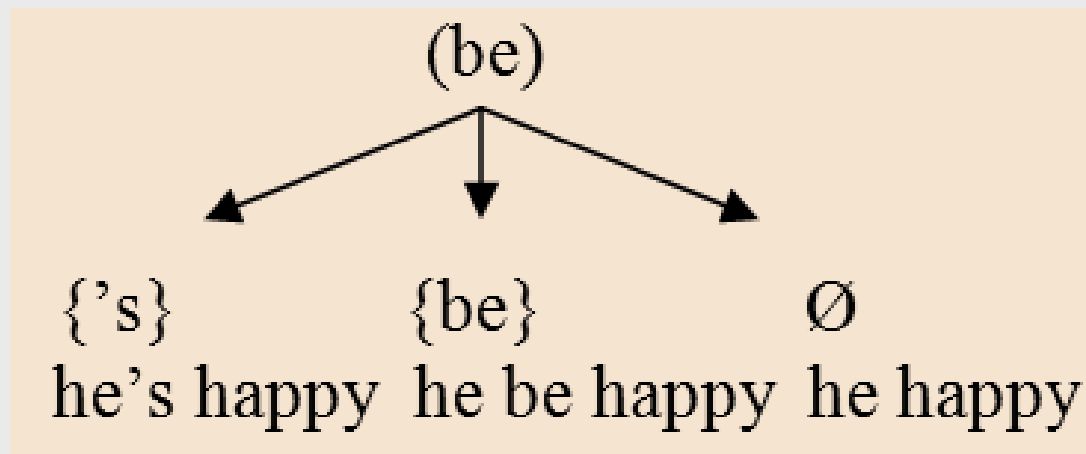
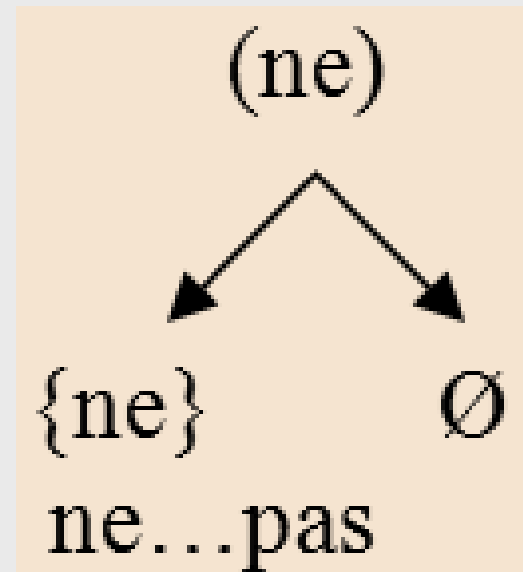
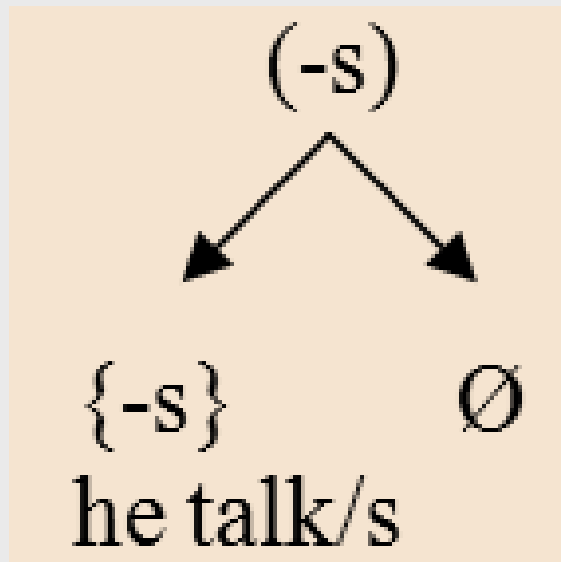
Associated through linguistic variables:

linguistic variation (dependent variable) and
social variation / language ideology/attitude
(independent variable)

Examples of linguistic variables

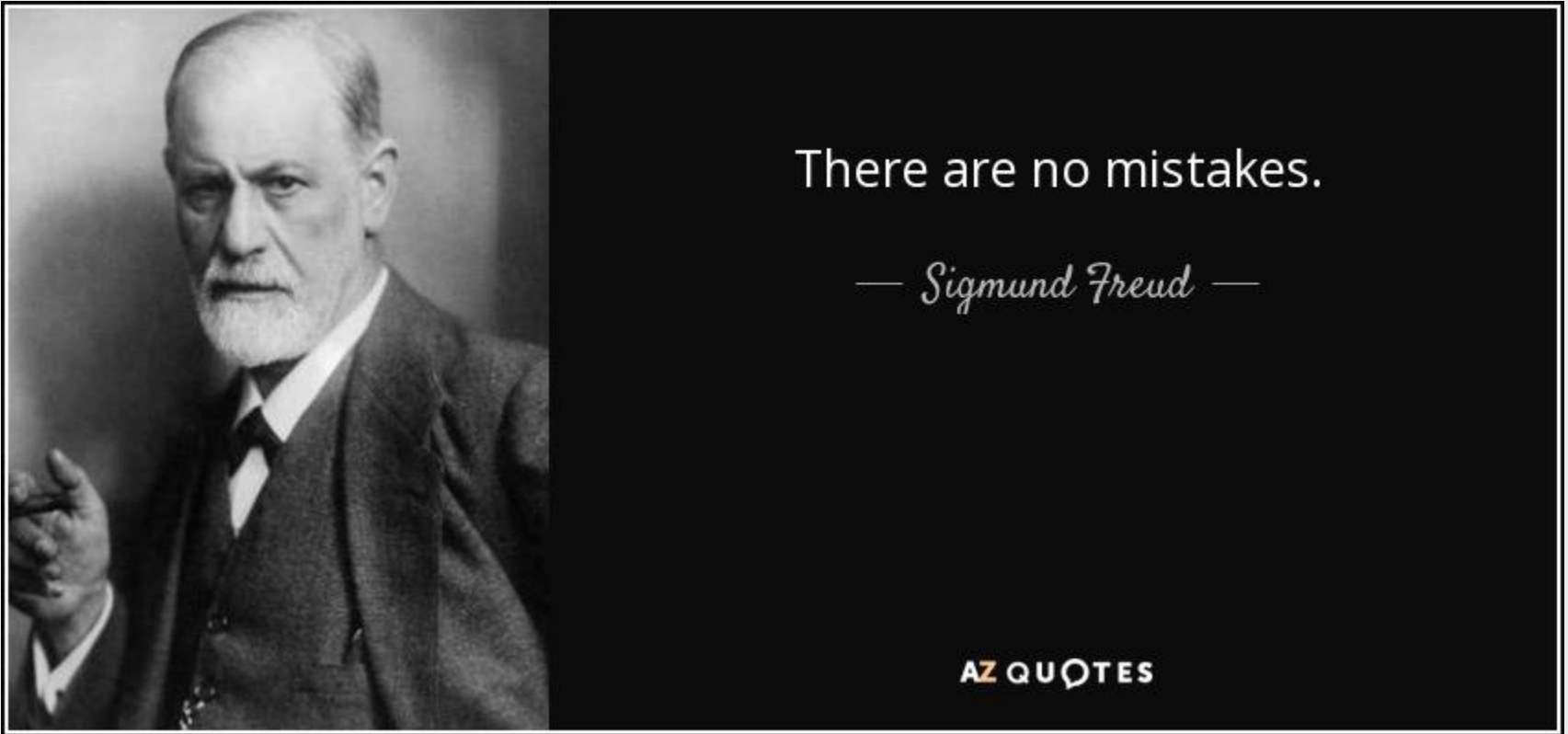


Non-phonological



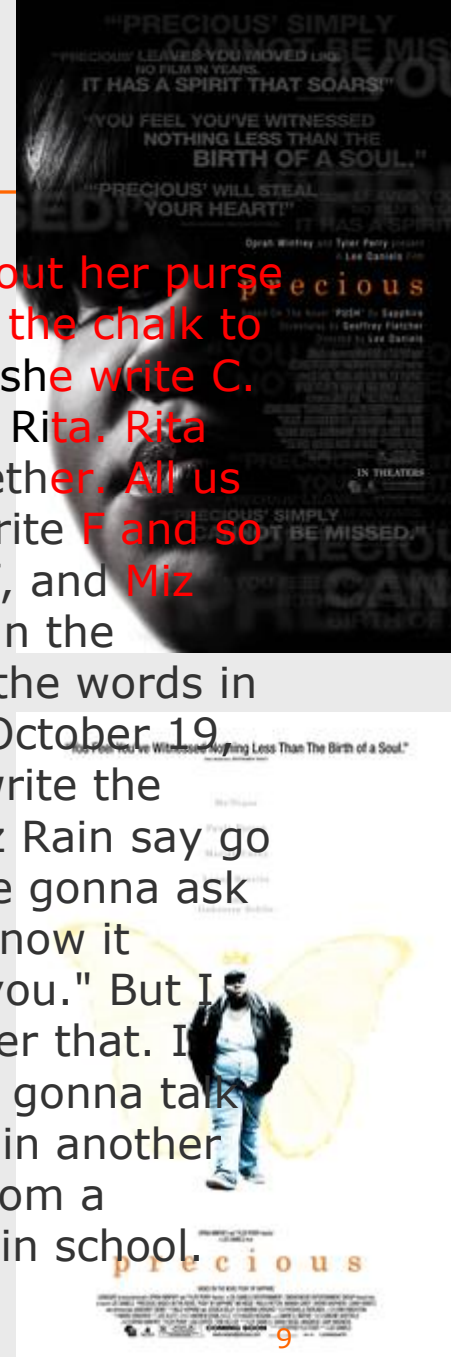
N.B.

"Mistakes" ("incorrect", "wrong", "non-standard" forms) are just different variants!



Identify the variants: *Sapphire, Push* (1996)

Miz Rain say, "At the beginning," and pick a piece of chalk out her purse and walk to the board. She write A on the board, she hand the chalk to Jermaine. Jermaine write B. Jermaine hand it to Consuelo, she write C. Consuelo hand it to Rhonda she write D. Rhonda hand it to Rita. Rita take a step and start to cry. Miz Rain say we all in this together. All us say E real loud, Rita go up 'n write E, hand me chalk 'n I write F and so it go. Then we sits back down all at once, thatmake us laff, and Miz Rain say this is the beginning, there are twenty-six letters in the alphabet, they all have a sound. These letters make up all the words in our language. Please open your notebook, write the date, October 19, 1987, then write the alphabet in your notebook. After we write the alphabet in our notebook we recite it out loud together. Miz Rain say go home and practice saying it 'n saying it. On Wednesday she gonna ask each one to stand up and deliver. Jermaine say, "Spoze I know it already?" Miz Rain say, "Then it should be no problem for you." But I remember Jermaine write Q after O instead of P. I remember that. I gonna practice. I sure am. Miz Rain say on Wednesday she gonna talk to us about keeping a journal. Tell us again we gotta bring in another notebook for to be our journal. How is a journal different from a notebook I wanna ask but I never asked a question before in school.



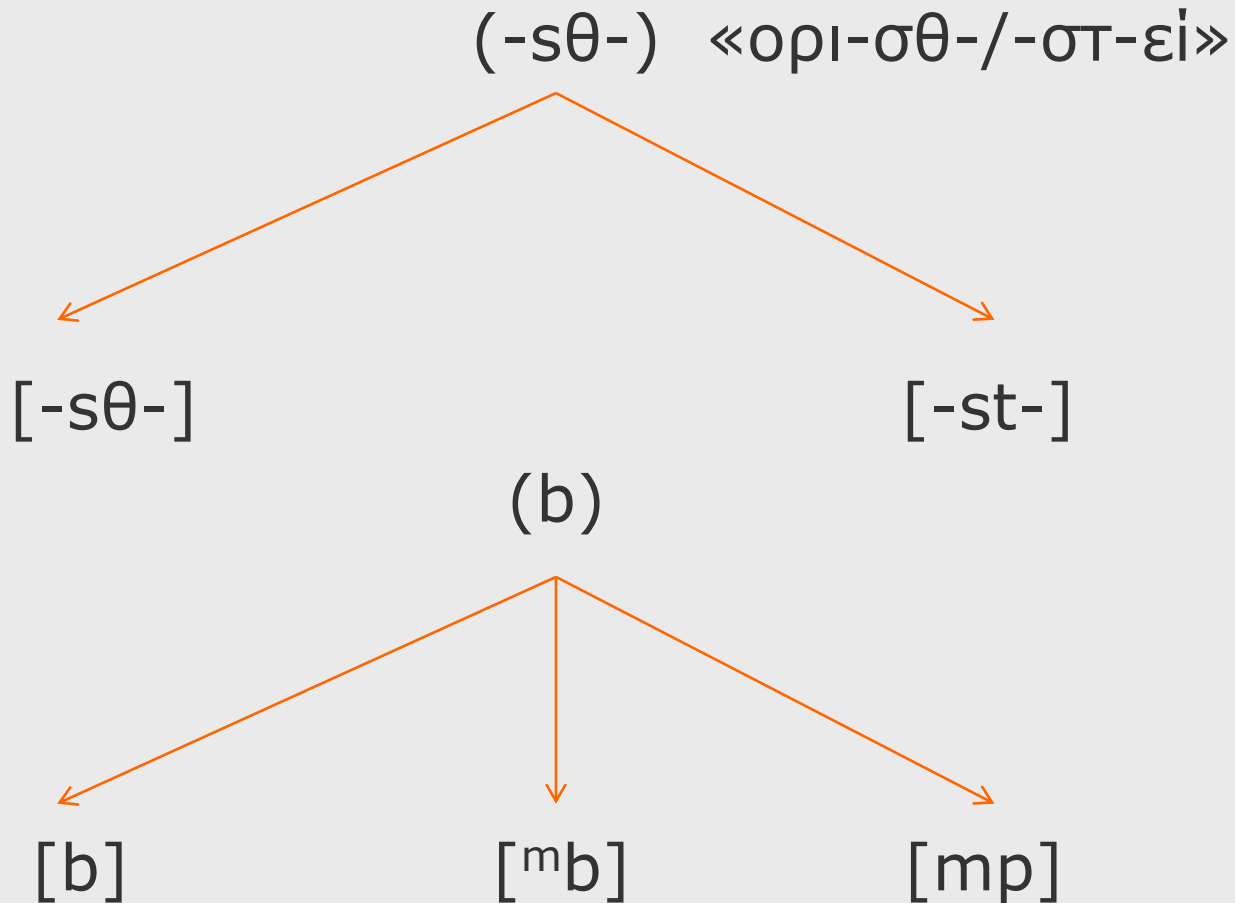
Some common variation in French

- » ne ... pas, pas
- » oui, ouais, mouais
- » capable [kapab(l)], cidre [sid(ʁ)]
- » C' est un imbecile [stɛ̃nɛ̃besil] [setɛ̃nɛ̃besil]
- » une autre fois [ynotfwa] [ynotrɔfwɑ]
- » Irez-vous? , Est-ce que vous irez? , Vous irez?

Some variation in German (Leemann, Derungs, Elspass, "Analyzing linguistic variation and change...")

Variable		Example variants
Non-professional soccer playing		<i>bolzen, Fussball spielen</i>
Second b	School exam	<i>Probe, Schulaufgabe</i>
Red pepp	Hiccups	<i>Schluckauf, Hicks</i>
Pancakes	Drawing pin	<i>Reissnagel, Heftzwecke</i>
Breadma	Wallet	<i>Portemonnaie, Geldbeutel</i>
Beef patt	Dull	<i>Langweilig, fad(e)</i>
to chat	Mashed potato	<i>Kartoffelbrei, Püree</i>
Slippers	3rd p. pl. <i>haben wir</i>	<i>ham, hei, hum</i>
Time 10	Pronunciation of '15'	<i>fuffzehn, fuffzeh</i>
Happy N	Pencil case	<i>Federmappe, Federtasche</i>
Slingsho	Demonstrative <i>das</i>	<i>das, des, dis, dos</i>
Armchai	Heel end	<i>Kanten, Raftl, Kruste</i>
	10 cent coin	<i>Groschen, Zehnerla</i>

Examples of linguistic variables in (Modern) Greek



Other examples from MG

*αγαπάω / ώ, αγαπούνε / άνε, αγαπούσα /
αγάπαγα, αγαπιόσαντε / αγαπιούνταν /
αγαπιόνταν(ε), κτήμα / χτήμα, κτυπώ / χτυπώ,
οίνος / κρασί, εφτά / επτά* **[diglossia
variants]**, *γλήγορα / γρήγορα, δανεική /
δανεικιά, πατέρες / πατεράδες, έφυγαν /
φύγανε, βγέστε / βγείτε, άφησέ τον / άσ'τον,
του δεκαπενταμελής / του δεκαπενταμελούς*
[«mistakes»], ...· *τα πήρα στο κρανίο, δίνε
του, ελλογιμότατε, ρε ...* **[stylistic variants /
registers]**· *monotonic / polytonic, MG
orthography / greeklish, ...* **[orthography]**

Variation in the written speech (Greek)

BREAKING NOOZ:

Joy • 02/03/2016 • 08:49 •

Efason iparhoun aftoi oi ellines protimo na apelathoun aftoi kai na kratisoume tous syrious anti afton...toulahiston tou miden na diekdikisoun karekles me tis evlogies tou sofou laou. I exipnada metanastefse kai afti se alli hora....ed

↪ Απάντηση

Διάλυση • 02/03/2016 • 08:47 •

Άμα θέλετε να μάθετε μερικοί που σχολιάζετε τα γκαρσόνια όπως λέτε μερικές κοινωνίες τα γκαρσόνια της στηρίζουν γκαρσόνια και όποιος αντέξει. Κοτούλες

↪ Απάντηση

ZQA • 02/03/2016 • 08:39 •

ΝΑ ΤΙ ΨΗΦΙΣΑΤΕ !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

↪ Απάντηση

ST • 02/03/2016 • 08:39 •

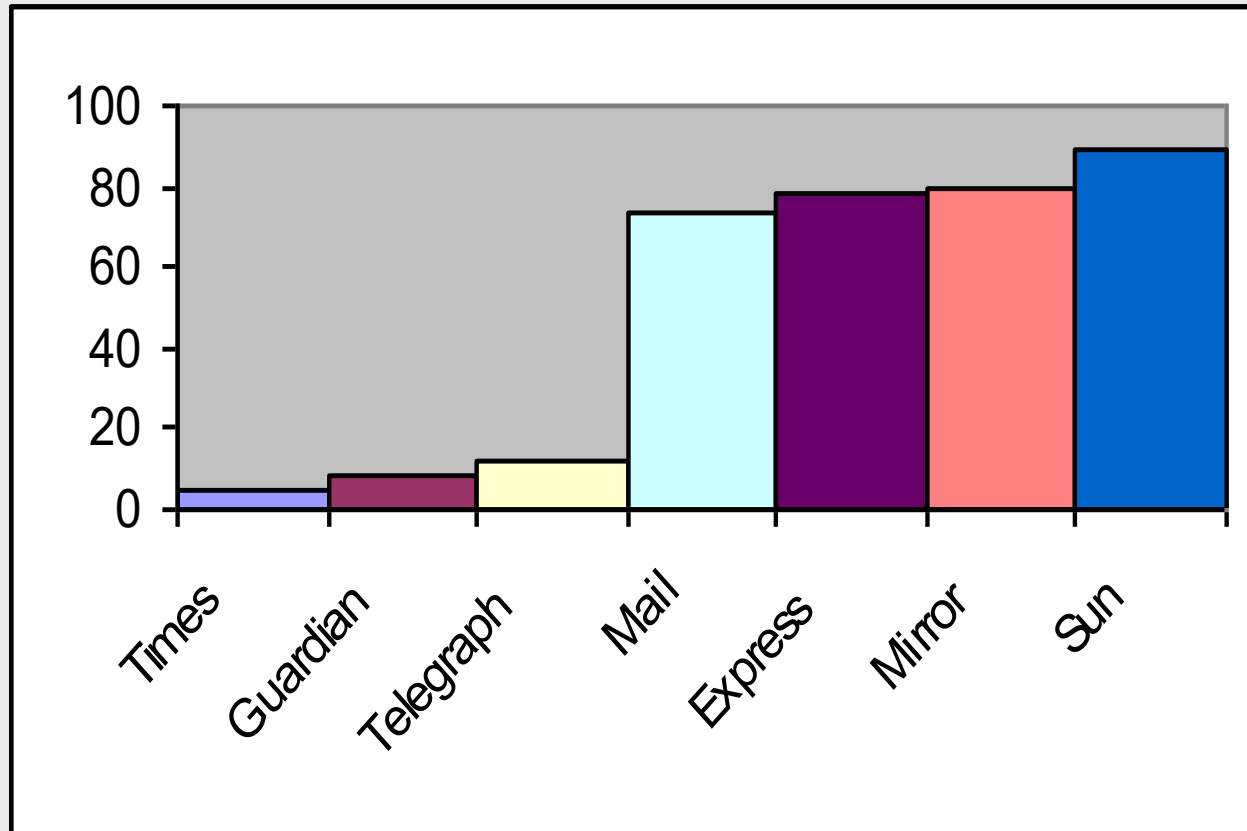
Δείξε μου τον φίλο σου να σου πω τι είσαι. Έχετε δει κανένα καλύτερο απο αυτές τις χολέρες του ΣΥΡΙΖΑ?Ολοι σ αυτ

↪ Απάντηση

Κοντά σε συμφωνία στο Brussels Group



A media-dependent variable



"Nurse filmed turning off man's life support" – "Retirement age raised to 66", *Times* 25/10/10,

"Nurse switched off man's ventilator" – "All-in-one £140 pension 'fairer'", *Sun* 25/10/10

Omission of determiners in seven British newspapers (Bell, 1991: 108)

Variables and levels of awareness (W. Labov)

» social stereotype

“A language feature that speakers are aware of and comment on.”

» social marker

“A linguistic feature whose usage correlates both with social group and with speech style; speakers are aware of such forms and their group associations but do not comment overtly on them.”

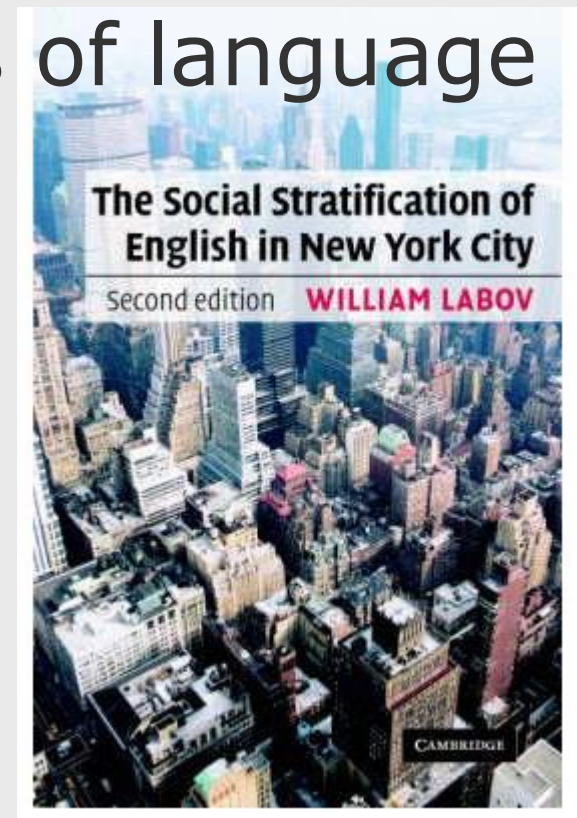
» social indicator

linguistic feature which correlates with social stratification or social group, but which shows no variation across different styles of speaking. Speakers do not seem to be aware of such forms and make no overt comment on them.

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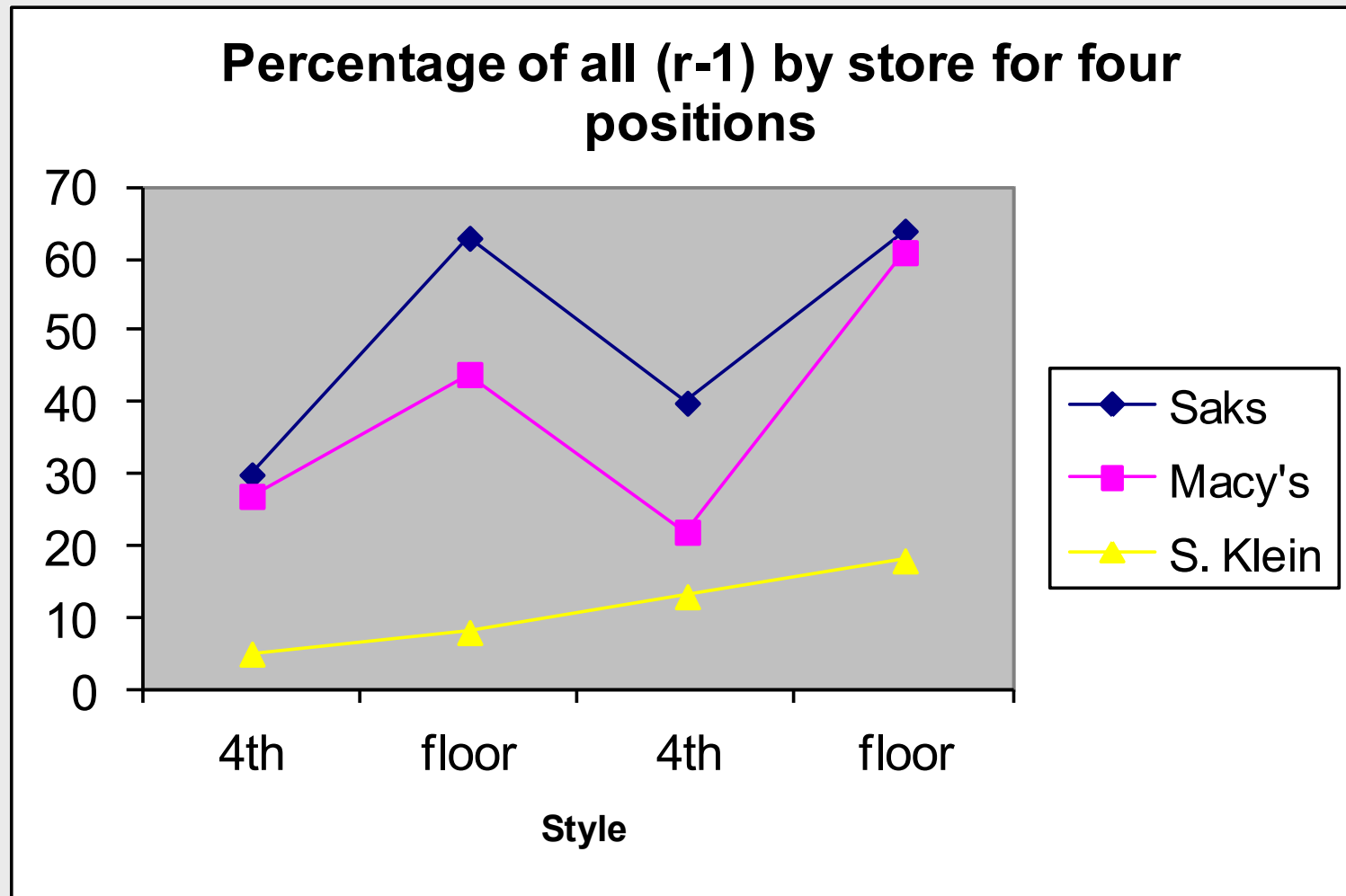


(r): Wikipedia

Rhoticity in English refers to the situations in which English speakers pronounce the historical **rhotic consonant** /r/, and is one of the most prominent distinctions by which varieties of English can be classified. The **English dialects of Scotland, Ireland, and most of the United States and Canada** preserve historical /r/, and are thus termed the **rhotic varieties**. The **non-rhotic varieties**, in which historical /r/ has been lost except before vowels, include all the dialects of **England**—except the **South West, the southern West Midlands, and parts of West Lancashire**—as well as the **English dialects of**

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W. Labov, "The Social Stratification of (r) in NY City Department Stores"



Case study: NY accent

» **Development of Broadcast Standard US English**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W68VaOuY6ew>

» **Why Bernie Sanders tuawks that way**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waeXBCUkuL8>

» **The WORST Thing About Bernie Sanders**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqOuy1ECrBw>

(r): The British Standard

A most British English pronunciation rule.

One of the easiest rules to learn when studying British English pronunciation is that of the silent < r >. It really is very simple:

RULE

Only say an < r > when it appears before a vowel sound.

Never say an < r > when it appears before a consonant or at the end of a word.

So in the word 'fork', you don't say the < r > because there is a consonant after it. In the name 'Charlie' you don't say the < r > for the same reason. However in the word 'grass' we do say the < r > because there is a vowel sound after it.

Linking /r/

The rule also works to join words together. For example, consider the word 'mother'. We normally would not say the < r > because it is at the end of the word, however, if a vowel sound begins the next word, we do pronounce it to join the words:


mother_and daughter

the < r > effectively moves on to the beginning of the word 'and'.

Schlep, Schmear, We're Walkin' Here: NYC Wants To Preserve Its Tawk

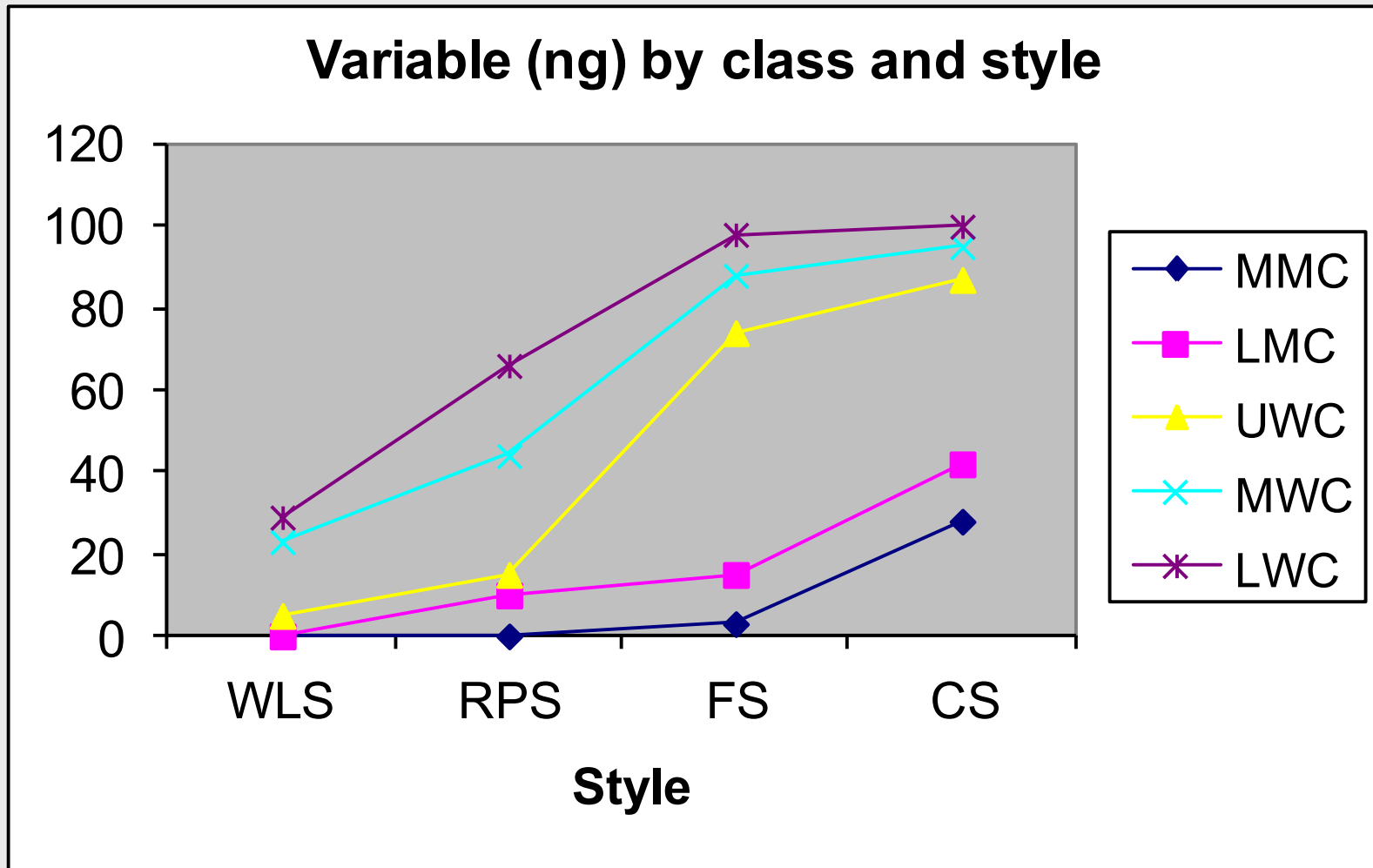
When it comes to preserving New York's dialect, 60 percent of locals surveyed say don't fuhgeddaboutit.



Matt Troutman, Patch Staff 

Posted Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 3:25 pm ET | Updated Fri, Feb 24, 2023 at 3:45 pm ET





P. Trudgill, "Norwich revisited"

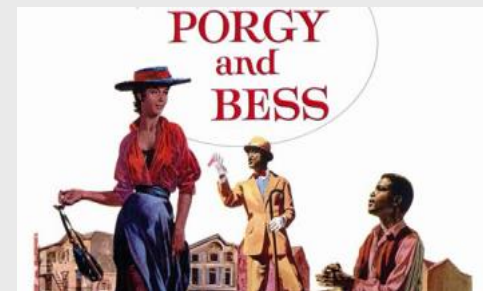


methodology, see Labov, 1966). The fact that the highest scores for this variable were, as can be seen, obtained by the younger and older age-groups, as opposed to the middle-aged groups, appears to be a phenomenon typical of variables which are not undergoing change. We can probably explain this pattern in terms of the lower educational background of older speakers, and in terms of the greater influence of the peer group on younger speakers as opposed to that of the mainstream norm on middle-aged speakers. In any case, we can note that variables not involved in

Identify the variants: (ng) in (representations of) Afroamerican

Oh, I got plenty o' nuttin'
And nuttin's plenty for me
I got no car, got no mule
I got no misery

De folks wid plenty o' plenty
Got a lock on de door
'Fraid somebody's a-goin' to rob
'em
While dey's out a-makin' more
What for?



Jenny Cheshire, “Linguistic Variation and Social Function”

- » She studies several variables in “youth language”, which she correlates with cultural characteristics. Variables:
 - ▶ present tense suffix with non-third-person singular subjects, e.g. we goes shopping on Saturdays
 - ▶ *has* with non-third-person singular subjects, e.g. we has a little fire, keeps us warm
 - ▶ *was* with plural subjects (and singular *you*), e.g. you was outside
 - ▶ multiple negation, e.g. *I’m not going nowhere*
 - ▶ *ain’t*, used for negative present tense forms of *be* and *have*, with all subjects, e.g. *I ain’t going, I ain’t got any*

Jenny Cheshire, "Linguistic Variation and Social Function"

- ▶ auxiliary *do* with third person singular subjects, e.g. *how much do he want for it?*
- ▶ past tense *come*, e.g. I come down here yesterday
- ▶ negative past tense *never*, used for SE *didn't*, e.g. *I never done it, it was him*
- ▶ *what* used for SE *who, whom, which, and that*, e.g. *there's a knob what you turn, are you the boy what's just come?*

Vernacular

Mainstream

1

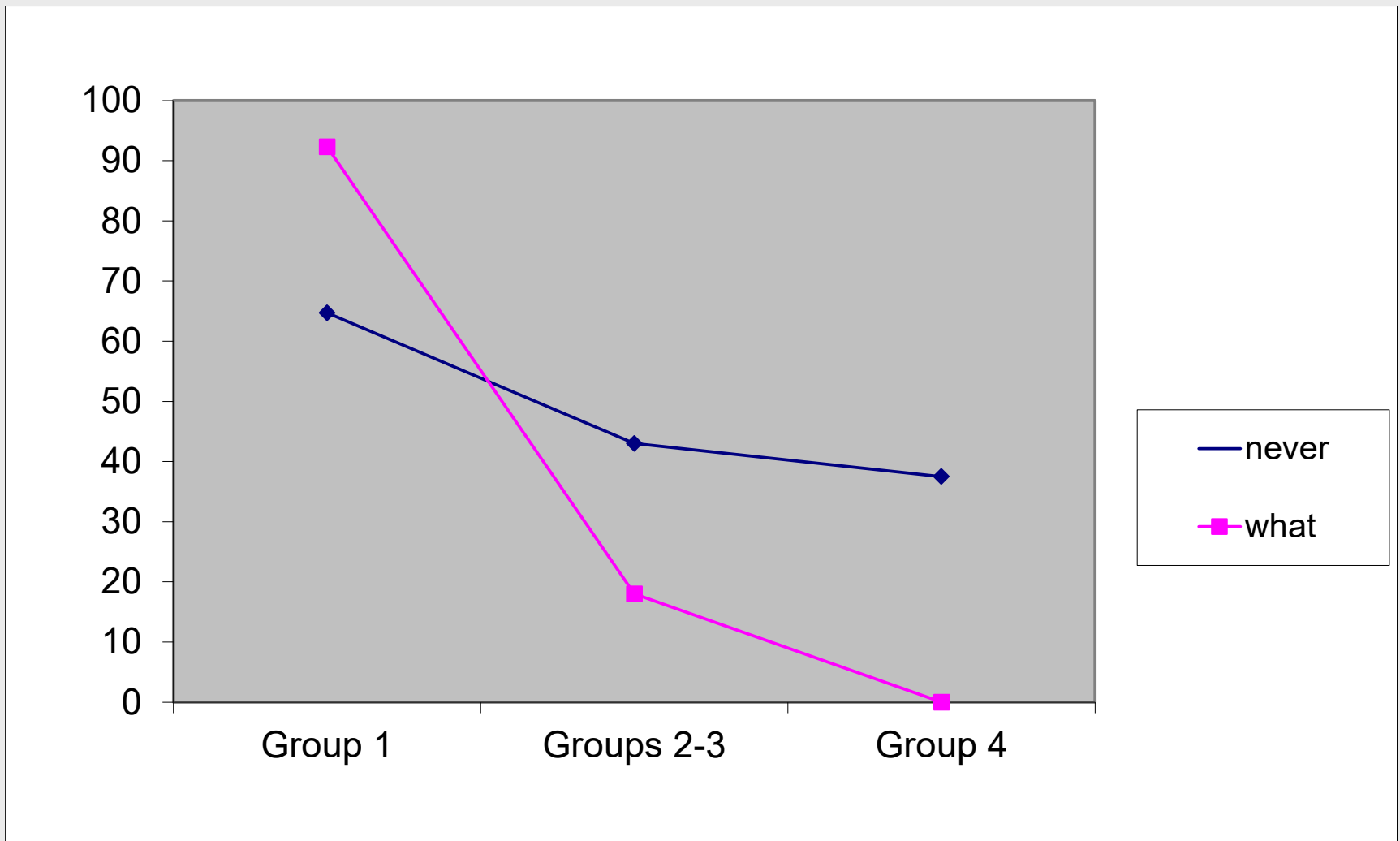
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3

4

Student Groups

Jenny Cheshire, "Linguistic Variation and Social Function"



Read: papers by
Labov,
Trudgill,
Cheshire

(in the [Basic Readings](#)

Documents /Αναγνώσματα
e-class)



Questions (1/2)

- » Make sure that for each study you can identify:
 - ▶ linguistic (dependent) variables
 - ▶ independent variables
 - ▶ stylistic dimension
 - ▶ linguistic or contextual constraints
(e.g., preconsonantal vs. final [r])
- » Make sure you can classify the linguistic variables into indicators, markers, stereotypes.
- » Is the stylistic dimension adequately defined? Does the operational notion of 'style' correspond to what you regularly understand by this term?

Questions (2/2)

- » Are the independent variables adequately defined? (Labov, 170-1, Cheshire, 186-7); are they defined *independently* of the linguistic variables? (for Trudgill, the use of expressions such as 'he go' was a criterion for inclusion in LWC; cf. Cheshire, 187, on swearing; is there *circularity* in their definitions?)
- » Is social stratification defined *independently* of ideological factors?
- » Were the hypotheses (fully) confirmed?
- » Are there any other shortcomings in the research procedure?

